

For Immediate Release
August 26, 2004

Contact: Meta Boyer
503-414-3273

USDA ANNOUNCES SELECTION OF FIRST CSP PARTICIPANTS
149 contracts selected in Oregon's Umatilla Watershed

PENDLETON, OR, August 26, 2004—USDA Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, Mack Gray, today echoed Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman in announcing that \$35 million in contracts will be awarded to 2,200 farmers and ranchers in 22 states who will be the first in the nation to participate in the new Conservation Security Program (CSP).

Gray also announced that 149 contracts would be awarded to producers in Oregon's Umatilla watershed, one of 18 watersheds to participate in this debut program. The contracts include over 350,000 acres, representing nearly 50 percent of the private land in the Umatilla watershed.

Speaking from the B.L. Davis Ranch, NRCS State Conservationist Bob Graham said that as a result of the strong conservation work of these local producers who are actively protecting and enhancing natural resources including water quality, soil quality and wildlife habitat, Oregon's natural resources are in good hands.

A highlight of the event was a presentation by Senator Gordon Smith who co-authored the original legislation.

While conservation incentive programs and technical assistance from NRCS date back to the Dust Bowl days of the 1930s, CSP represents the first time agricultural producers are being paid for ongoing stewardship.

"All successful applicants have achieved high technical standards for protecting soil and water quality," said Graham. "These are model conservationists who have invested their time and money into farm conservation plans for years. Based on their conservation leadership and action on private lands in the Umatilla Watershed, over \$5 million will be infused into the local economy from the Conservation Security Program this year."

Work done by the producers in the 18 selected CSP watersheds will significantly benefit both their own watersheds and the people and resources downstream. Collectively, these benefited areas represent some 28 million acres, an area about the size of Maine.

CSP is a voluntary program that supports ongoing conservation stewardship of agricultural working lands and enhances the condition of America's natural resources. For more information on CSP and other NRCS programs see <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs>.

###